

Center for Business and Economic Research

Polymer Technology Center (PTECH)
Huntington, WV

Stakeholder Engagement Report, Market
Analysis and Feasibility Study

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Polymer Technology Center Huntington, WV (PTECH): Stakeholder Engagement Report, Market Analysis and Feasibility Study

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Executive Summary

The Polymer Technology Center (PTECH) in Huntington, West Virginia is a public/private partnership focused on assisting established manufacturing firms with new product development and introduction. The product development center (PDC) lowers barriers to new product introduction principally through offering shared resources that are often cost prohibitive for individual firms to acquire independently. In addition to the PDC, which will be focused on manufacturers utilizing polymer-based products or advanced materials in their supply chains, PTECH will also house a companion light manufacturing center (LMC) open to a broader sector of manufacturing industries looking for affordable space for scalable manufacturing.

An analysis of comparable centers confirms the composition of stakeholders and partners, including private industry (Rubberlite, Inc.), academic (Marshall University and Marshall University Research Corporation) and government (City of Huntington). An initial MOU currently in process with this coordinating committee is clarifying the collaboration. The management structure of PTECH is consistent with similar centers – a governing body such as a board of directors with 7-11 members representing principally industry and academia, but also containing representatives from regional, state and local government.

Further, the initial business plan for PTECH includes an operational model based on lease agreements with tenants as well as fees for access to equipment and technical services. Coordinating committee members will meet following the submission of this report to identify funds appropriate for creating the formal business plan supported by a more robust supply chain and market analysis as well as a marketing and recruitment strategy.

Coordinating committee members also anticipate using the findings of this report to further clarify roles and commitments with current and future partners. In-kind resources such as technical expertise and mentoring for businesses, as well as equipment donations from private and academic partners is customary. Additionally, university partners may also offer some operational staff or marketing support. Similarly, regional economic development entities may offer marketing and recruitment support. State and local government partners can help defray operational costs through abatement of property taxes or holding the land in a public trust.

PTECH is distinct from traditional incubators and accelerators with its focus on existing firms, rather than startups or entrepreneurs. Thus PTECH targets resources to companies at a stage of product development that generally exhibits higher success rates. The initial market analysis indicates that there is potential for creating a manufacturing hub in Huntington, WV. PTECH may mitigate some potential future costs motivating projected regional declines in manufacturing. Through creating a larger agglomeration of manufacturing firms and providing the necessary educational and training infrastructure to support the workforce, PTECH facilitates job growth for the region.